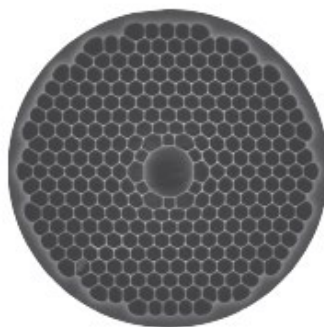# HC-800B - May 23, 2025

Item # HC-800B was discontinued on May 23, 2025. For informational purposes, this is a copy of the website content at that time and is valid only for the stated product.
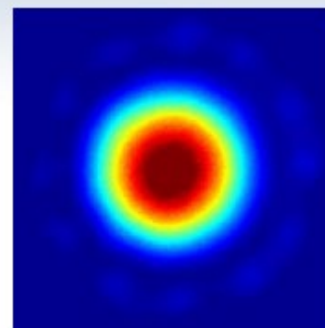
HOLLOW CORE PHOTONIC CRYSTAL FIBERS

► **Zero Dispersion Close to Design Wavelength**
► **Large Continuous Operating Bandwidth**
► **Modal Index ≈1 & Virtually No Fresnel Reflection**

HC-1060

Fiber Cross-Section Schematic

Typical Near-Field Intensity Profile

OVERVIEW

Features

- Available with Design Wavelengths of 820, 1060, or 1550 nm
- 7-Cell Core Offers Large Continuous Operation Bandwidth
- Small Number of Core Modes and Parasitic Surface Modes
- Near-Gaussian Fundamental Mode
- Virtually Free of Optical Nonlinearity
- Ultra-Low Bend Loss
- Low Fresnel Reflection from the End-Faces (Modal Index ≈ 1)

Applications

- Delivery of Ultra-Short High-Power Optical Pulses
- Pulse Compression and Pulse Shaping
- Sensors and Spectroscopy

Photonic bandgap (hollow core) fibers guide light in a hollow core that is surrounded by a microstructured cladding. Photonic bandgaps can form in materials that have a periodically structured refractive index; in Photonic Crystal Fibers (PCFs) this is achieved by using a periodic arrangement of air holes in silica. These fibers are sold based on the overall optical specifications and not the physical structure.

A photonic bandgap in the cladding acts as a virtually loss-free mirror confining light to a core, which does not need to be fabricated from a solid material. In some types of PCF, <1% of the optical power propagates in the glass, greatly reducing the extent to which the bulk properties of the glass determine the properties of the fiber. Therefore, hollow core PCFs exhibit extremely low nonlinearity, high breakdown threshold, and negligible interface reflection. Furthermore, it becomes possible to fabricate low-loss fibers from comparatively high-loss materials, extending the range of materials that can be considered for fiber fabrication. The fiber is protected by a single-layer acrylate coating and can be stripped and cleaved like ordinary solid fibers.

Modal Properties
As with conventional single mode fibers, the favored mode in hollow-core PCFs has a quasi-Gaussian intensity distribution. Even though hollow core PCFs are intended to be used like other single mode fibers, no currently available low-loss hollow-core PCF is a true single mode waveguide; typically, they support several

higher order core modes and, in some cases, additional "surface" modes located at the core-cladding boundary. All of these modes have higher loss than the fundamental mode and generally decay rapidly, but their presence needs to be taken into account when designing input and output coupling optics.

Chromatic Dispersion

Unlike in conventional fiber where material dispersion plays a major role, group velocity dispersion (GVD) in hollow-core PCF is dominated by waveguide dispersion. A plot of dispersion versus wavelength is upward sloping and crosses zero close to the center of the operating wavelength band, for any design wavelength, including those where the dispersion of silica makes it impossible to achieve zero dispersion in conventional fiber. See the *Graphs* tab for dispersion curves for some of our hollow core fibers.

Fiber Manufacturing

Attenuation

Hollow core fibers only guide light within the wavelength range covered by the photonic bandgap in the cladding. Outside of that range, loss increases sharply. See the *Graphs* tab for typical attenuation curves for our hollow core fibers.
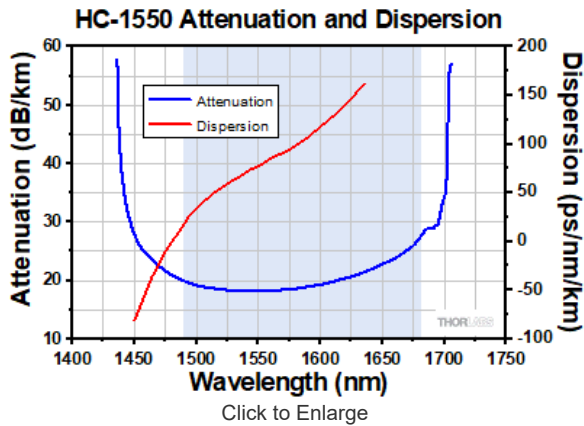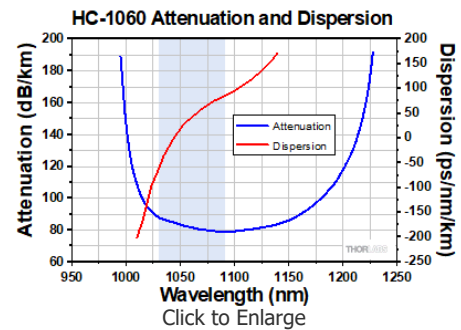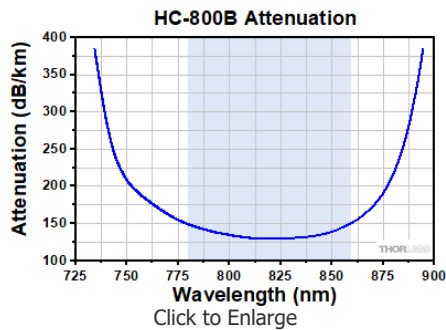
Termination

Please note that these fibers will ship with both ends sealed in order to prevent moisture and dust from entering the hollow capillary structure during storage. Prior to use, it is necessary to cleave them using, for example, our S90R Ruby Fiber Scribe or our Vytran® CAC400 Compact Fiber Cleaver.

SPECS

Item #	HC-800B	HC-1060	HC-1550
Optical Properties			
Design Wavelength	820 nm	1060 nm	1550 nm
Mode Field Diameter[a,b]	5.5 ± 2 µm	6.7 ± 1 µm	9.0 ± 1 µm
Operating Wavelength Range	780 - 860 nm	1030 - 1090 nm	1490 - 1680 nm
Attenuation[c]	<250 dB/km	<100 dB/km	<30 dB/km
Core Index	Proprietary[d]		
Cladding Index	Proprietary[d]		
Physical Properties			
Core Diameter[e]	7.5 ± 1.5 µm	9.0 ± 1.5 µm	11.5 ± 1.0 µm
Cladding Diameter	130 ± 5 µm	120 ± 5 µm	120 ± 2 µm
Coating Diameter (Fiber O.D.)	220 ± 50 µm	240 ± 40 µm	220 ± 30 µm
Cladding Material	Pure Silica		
Coating Material	Acrylate, Single Layer		

a. At Design Wavelength
b. Full $1/e^2$ width of the near field intensity distribution.
c. Over Operating Wavelength Range
d. We regret that we cannot provide this proprietary information.
e. Core Formed by Removing 7 Hexagonal Unit Cells of the Cladding

GRAPHS

HC-800B Attenuation

Click to Enlarge

HC-1060 Attenuation and Dispersion

Click to Enlarge

HC-1550 Attenuation and Dispersion

Click to Enlarge

HANDLING

The following application note from NKT Photonics details stripping and cleaving photonic crystal fiber.

Application_Note_-_Stripping_Cleaving_and_Coupling.pdf

DAMAGE THRESHOLD

Laser-Induced Damage in Silica Optical Fibers

The following tutorial details damage mechanisms relevant to unterminated (bare) fiber, terminated optical fiber, and other fiber components from laser light sources. These mechanisms include damage that occurs at the air / glass interface (when free-space coupling or when using connectors) and in the optical fiber itself. A fiber component, such as a bare fiber, patch cable, or fused coupler, may have multiple potential avenues for damage (e.g., connectors, fiber end faces, and the device itself). The maximum power that a fiber can handle will always be limited by the lowest limit of any of these damage mechanisms.

| Quick Links |
|---|
| Damage at the Air / Glass Interface |
| Intrinsic Damage Threshold |
| Preparation and Handling of Optical Fibers |

While the damage threshold can be estimated using scaling relations and general rules, absolute damage thresholds in optical fibers are very application dependent and user specific. Users can use this guide to estimate a safe power level that minimizes the risk of damage. Following all appropriate preparation and handling guidelines, users should be able to operate a fiber component up to the specified maximum power level; if no maximum is specified for a component, users should abide by the "practical safe level" described below for safe operation of the component. Factors that can reduce power handling and cause damage to a fiber component include, but are not limited to, misalignment during fiber coupling, contamination of the fiber end face, or imperfections in the fiber itself. For further discussion about an optical fiber's power handling abilities for a specific application, please contact Thorlabs' Tech Support.

### Damage at the Air / Glass Interface

There are several potential damage mechanisms that can occur at the air / glass interface. Light is incident on this

interface when free-space coupling or when two fibers are mated using optical connectors. High-intensity light can damage the end face leading to reduced power handling and permanent damage to the fiber. For fibers terminated with optical connectors where the connectors are fixed to the fiber ends using epoxy, the heat generated by high-intensity light can burn the epoxy and leave residues on the fiber facet directly in the beam path.
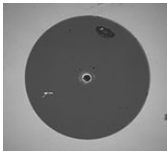
Click to Enlarge
Figure 36A
Damaged Fiber End
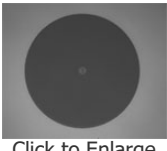
Click to Enlarge
Figure 36B
Undamaged Fiber End

Damage Mechanisms on the Bare Fiber End Face

Damage mechanisms on a fiber end face can be modeled similarly to bulk optics, and industry-standard damage thresholds for UV Fused Silica substrates can be applied to silica-based fiber. However, unlike bulk optics, the relevant surface areas and beam diameters involved at the air / glass interface of an optical fiber are very small, particularly for coupling into single mode (SM) fiber. therefore, for a given power density, the power incident on the fiber needs to be lower for a smaller beam diameter.

Table 36C lists two thresholds for optical power densities: a theoretical damage threshold and a "practical safe level". In general, the theoretical damage threshold represents the estimated maximum power density that can be incident on the fiber end face without risking damage with very good fiber end face and coupling conditions. The "practical safe level" power density represents minimal risk of fiber damage. Operating a fiber or component beyond the practical safe level is possible, but users must follow the appropriate handling instructions and verify performance at low powers prior to use.

Table 36C Estimated Optical Power Densities on Air / Glass Interface[a]		
Type	Theoretical Damage Threshold[b]	Practical Safe Level[c]
CW (Average Power)	~1 MW/cm^2	~250 kW/cm^2
10 ns Pulsed (Peak Power)	~5 GW/cm^2	~1 GW/cm^2

a. All values are specified for unterminated (bare), undoped silica fiber and apply for free space coupling into a clean fiber end face.
b. This is an estimated maximum power density that can be incident on a fiber end face without risking damage. Verification of the performance and reliability of fiber components in the system before operating at high power must be done by the user, as it is highly system dependent.
c. This is the estimated safe optical power density that can be incident on a fiber end face without damaging the fiber under most operating conditions.

Calculating the Effective Area for Single Mode Fibers

The effective area for single mode (SM) fiber is defined by the mode field diameter (MFD), which is the cross-sectional area through which light propagates in the fiber; this area includes the fiber core and also a portion of the cladding. To achieve good efficiency when coupling into a single mode fiber, the diameter of the input beam must match the MFD of the fiber.

As an example, SM400 single mode fiber has a mode field diameter (MFD) of ~Ø3 µm operating at 400 nm, while the MFD for SMF-28 Ultra single mode fiber operating at 1550 nm is Ø10.5 µm. The effective area for these fibers can be calculated as follows:

$$\textbf{SM400 Fiber: } Area = Pi \times (MFD/2)^2 = Pi \times (1.5 \text{ µm})^2 = 7.07 \text{ µm}^2 = 7.07 \times 10^{-8} \text{ cm}^2$$

$$\textbf{SMF-28 Ultra Fiber: } Area = Pi \times (MFD/2)^2 = Pi \times (5.25 \text{ µm})^2 = 86.6 \text{ µm}^2 = 8.66 \times 10^{-7} \text{ cm}^2$$

To estimate the power level that a fiber facet can handle, the power density is multiplied by the effective area. Please note that this calculation assumes a uniform intensity profile, but most laser beams exhibit a Gaussian-like shape within single mode fiber, resulting in a higher power density at the center of the beam compared to the edges. Therefore, these calculations will slightly overestimate the power corresponding to the damage threshold or the practical safe level. Using the estimated power densities assuming a CW light source, we can determine the corresponding power levels as:

$$\textbf{SM400 Fiber: } 7.07 \times 10^{-8} \text{ cm}^2 \times 1 \text{ MW/cm}^2 = 7.1 \times 10^{-8} \text{ MW} = 71 \text{ mW (Theoretical Damage Threshold)}$$
$$7.07 \times 10^{-8} \text{ cm}^2 \times 250 \text{ kW/cm}^2 = 1.8 \times 10^{-5} \text{ kW} = 18 \text{ mW (Practical Safe Level)}$$

$$\textbf{SMF-28 Ultra Fiber: } 8.66 \times 10^{-7} \text{ cm}^2 \times 1 \text{ MW/cm}^2 = 8.7 \times 10^{-7} \text{ MW} = 870 \text{ mW (Theoretical Damage Threshold)}$$
$$8.66 \times 10^{-7} \text{ cm}^2 \times 250 \text{ kW/cm}^2 = 2.1 \times 10^{-4} \text{ kW} = 210 \text{ mW (Practical Safe Level)}$$

Effective Area of Multimode Fibers

The effective area of a multimode (MM) fiber is defined by the core diameter, which is typically far larger than the MFD of an SM fiber. For optimal coupling, Thorlabs recommends focusing a beam to a spot roughly 70 - 80% of the core diameter. The larger effective area of MM fibers lowers the power density on the fiber end face, allowing higher optical powers (typically on the order of kilowatts) to be coupled into multimode fiber without damage.

Damage Mechanisms Related to Ferrule / Connector Termination

Fibers terminated with optical connectors have additional power handling

considerations. Fiber is typically terminated using epoxy to bond the fiber to a ceramic or steel ferrule. When light is coupled into the fiber through a connector, light that does not enter the core and propagate down the fiber is scattered into the outer layers of the fiber, into the ferrule, and the epoxy used to hold the fiber in the ferrule. If the light is intense enough, it can burn the epoxy, causing it to vaporize and deposit a residue on the face of the connector. This results in localized absorption sites on the fiber end face that reduce coupling efficiency and increase scattering, causing further damage.

For several reasons, epoxy-related damage is dependent on the wavelength. In general, light scatters more strongly at short wavelengths than at longer wavelengths. Misalignment when coupling is also more likely due to the small MFD of short-wavelength SM fiber that also produces more scattered light.

To minimize the risk of burning the epoxy, fiber connectors can be constructed to have an epoxy-free air gap between the optical fiber and ferrule near the fiber end face. Our high-power multimode fiber patch cables use connectors with this design feature.

Estimated Power Handling in Terminated Silica Optical Fibers

Click to Enlarge

Figure 36D Plot showing approximate input power that can be incident on a single mode silica optical fiber with a termination. Each line shows the estimated power level due to a specific damage mechanism. The maximum power handling is limited by the lowest power level from all relevant damage mechanisms (indicated by a solid line).

Determining Power Handling with Multiple Damage Mechanisms

When fiber cables or components have multiple avenues for damage (e.g., fiber patch cables), the maximum power handling is always limited by the lowest damage threshold that is relevant to the fiber component. In general, this represents the highest input power that can be incident on the patch cable end face and not the coupled output power.

As an illustrative example, Figure 36D shows an estimate of the power handling limitations of a single mode fiber patch cable due to damage to the fiber end face and damage via an optical connector. The total input power handling of a terminated fiber at a given wavelength is limited by the lower of the two limitations at any given wavelength (indicated by the solid lines). A single mode fiber operating at around 488 nm is primarily limited by damage to the fiber end face (blue solid line), but fibers operating at 1550 nm are limited by damage to the optical connector (red solid line).

In the case of a multimode fiber, the effective mode area is defined by the core diameter, which is larger than the effective mode area for SM fiber. This results in a lower power density on the fiber end face and allows higher optical powers (on the order of kilowatts) to be coupled into the fiber without damage (not shown in graph). However, the damage limit of the ferrule / connector termination remains unchanged and as a result, the maximum power handling for a multimode fiber is limited by the ferrule and connector termination.

Please note that these are rough estimates of power levels where damage is very unlikely with proper handling and alignment procedures. It is worth noting that optical fibers are frequently used at power levels above those described here. However, these applications typically require expert users and testing at lower powers first to minimize risk of damage. Even still, optical fiber components should be considered a consumable lab supply if used at high power levels.

Intrinsic Damage Threshold

In addition to damage mechanisms at the air / glass interface, optical fibers also display power handling limitations due to damage mechanisms within the optical fiber itself. These limitations will affect all fiber components as they are intrinsic to the fiber itself. Two categories of damage within the fiber are damage from bend losses and damage from photodarkening.

Bend Losses

Bend losses occur when a fiber is bent to a point where light traveling in the core is incident on the core/cladding interface at an angle higher than the critical angle, making total internal reflection impossible. Under these circumstances, light escapes the fiber, often in a localized area. The light escaping the fiber typically has a high power density, which burns the fiber coating as well as any surrounding furcation tubing.

A special category of optical fiber, called double-clad fiber, can reduce the risk of bend-loss damage by allowing the fiber's cladding (2nd layer) to also function as a waveguide in addition to the core. By making the critical angle of the cladding/coating interface higher than the critical angle of the core/clad interface, light that escapes the core is loosely confined within the cladding. It will then leak out over a distance of centimeters or meters instead of at one localized spot within the fiber, minimizing the risk of damage. Thorlabs manufactures and sells 0.22 NA double-clad multimode fiber, which boasts very high, megawatt range power handling.

Photodarkening

A second damage mechanism, called photodarkening or solarization, can occur in fibers used with ultraviolet or short-wavelength visible light, particularly those with germanium-doped cores. Fibers used at these wavelengths will experience increased attenuation over time. The mechanism that causes photodarkening is largely unknown, but several fiber designs have been developed to mitigate it. For example, fibers with a very low hydroxyl ion (OH) content have been found to resist photodarkening and using other dopants, such as fluorine, can also reduce photodarkening.
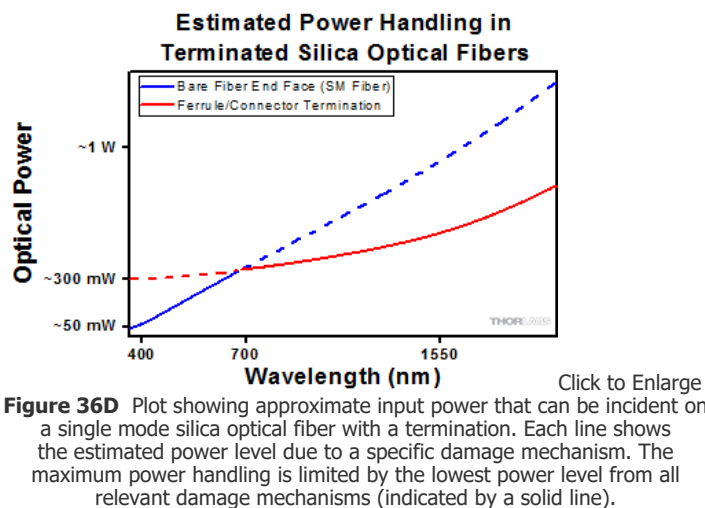
Even with the above strategies in place, all fibers eventually experience photodarkening when used with UV or short-wavelength light, and thus, fibers used at these wavelengths should be considered consumables.

Preparation and Handling of Optical Fibers

General Cleaning and Operation Guidelines

These general cleaning and operation guidelines are recommended for all fiber optic products. Users should still follow specific guidelines for an individual product as outlined in the support documentation or manual. Damage threshold calculations only apply when all appropriate cleaning and handling procedures are followed.

1. All light sources should be turned off prior to installing or integrating optical fibers (terminated or bare). This ensures that focused beams of light are not incident on fragile parts of the connector or fiber, which can possibly cause damage.

2. The power-handling capability of an optical fiber is directly linked to the quality of the fiber/connector end face. Always inspect the fiber end prior to connecting the fiber to an optical system. The fiber end face should be clean and clear of dirt and other contaminants that can cause scattering of coupled light. Bare fiber should be cleaved prior to use and users should inspect the fiber end to ensure a good quality cleave is achieved.

3. If an optical fiber is to be spliced into the optical system, users should first verify that the splice is of good quality at a low optical power prior to high-power use. Poor splice quality may increase light scattering at the splice interface, which can be a source of fiber damage.

4. Users should use low power when aligning the system and optimizing coupling; this minimizes exposure of other parts of the fiber (other than the core) to light. Damage from scattered light can occur if a high power beam is focused on the cladding, coating, or connector.

Tips for Using Fiber at Higher Optical Power

Optical fibers and fiber components should generally be operated within safe power level limits, but under ideal conditions (very good optical alignment and very clean optical end faces), the power handling of a fiber component may be increased. Users must verify the performance and stability of a fiber component within their system prior to increasing input or output power and follow all necessary safety and operation instructions. The tips below are useful suggestions when considering increasing optical power in an optical fiber or component.

1. Splicing a fiber component into a system using a fiber splicer can increase power handling as it minimizes possibility of air/fiber interface damage. Users should follow all appropriate guidelines to prepare and make a high-quality fiber splice. Poor splices can lead to scattering or regions of highly localized heat at the splice interface that can damage the fiber.

2. After connecting the fiber or component, the system should be tested and aligned using a light source at low power. The system power can be ramped up slowly to the desired output power while periodically verifying all components are properly aligned and that coupling efficiency is not changing with respect to optical launch power.

3. Bend losses that result from sharply bending a fiber can cause light to leak from the fiber in the stressed area. When operating at high power, the localized heating that can occur when a large amount of light escapes a small localized area (the stressed region) can damage the fiber. Avoid disturbing or accidently bending fibers during operation to minimize bend losses.

4. Users should always choose the appropriate optical fiber for a given application. For example, large-mode-area fibers are a good alternative to standard single mode fibers in high-power applications as they provide good beam quality with a larger MFD, decreasing the power density on the air/fiber interface.

5. Step-index silica single mode fibers are normally not used for ultraviolet light or high-peak-power pulsed applications due to the high spatial power densities associated with these applications.

Hollow Core Fibers with 7-Cell Core

Part Number	Description	Price	Availability
HC-800B	Hollow Core PCF, 820 nm, Ø7.5 µm Core	$900.54 Per Meter	Lead Time
HC-1060	Hollow Core PCF, 1060 nm, Ø9.0 µm Core	$841.82 Per Meter	Today

| HC-1550 | Hollow Core PCF, 1550 nm, Ø11.5 μm Core | $587.31
Per Meter | Today |